

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

Otis Q. Sellers, Bible Teacher

THE BELIEVER'S DESTINY

After many years of careful observation, I am convinced that the fundamentalists, the dispensationalists, and the premillennialists have no real conviction in regard to where God's people are going to be in the future, what we are going to be doing, or how we are going to spend our time. They have not, up to this time, come forth with any real, solid Biblical truth in regard to this matter. And if any other group, sect, or denomination has done so, I have failed to detect it in their writings which have been examined.

On a recent Sunday morning I watched, for a time, part of the televised broadcast of the morning service of a great church which prides itself on being Biblical. The pastor was outlining what his church believed, and he said in part: "We believe that the Lord is coming back; and when He does, His church will be caught up into the air to meet Him. We will be with Him there for seven years while the earth is being cleansed by the fires of the great tribulation, after which we will return to the earth with Him to help set up His kingdom. And then we will rule and reign with Him for a thousand years."

Exactly one week later I listened to the same program and heard this same man say: "The day will come when the Lord will descend from heaven; and we will be caught up to meet Him in the air, from which He will take us with Him back to heaven where we will be forever with Him."

Such statements as these are almost typical of the contradictions spoken by many who claim the Bible for their authority. They simply have not faced up to the facts as to what the Word of God has to say about the future home of God's people.

If the Bible is carefully examined from Genesis to Malachi, there will not be found one single hint, suggestion, or intimation that anyone ever expected or even desired to go to heaven. The Hebrew word for heaven (*shamayim*) is found 419 times in the Old Testament and is translated "heaven" in 398 passages and "air" in 21. Yet, even in all this wealth of references, each one of which I have examined with assiduous care, there cannot be found a hint that a home in heaven was the expectation of any man, that any man expected to go there at death, or that it would be his home when he was raised from the dead. God never promised anyone a place in heaven in any of the thirty-nine books that make up the Old Testament. In fact, a distinctly opposite truth is set forth in its pages, as the Spirit of God declared through David in Psalm 37 :9, 11 and 22. (See Issue No. **SB073**).

There is nothing in the Old Testament which in any way contradicts the expectation that the Psalmist held out to the righteous. The experiences of Enoch and Elijah have no bearing on this subject, and they should not be used to nullify the Word of God. They are two special cases of Godly men who were taken alive into heaven in connection with some special purpose of God. The expectation of righteous men from Adam to Christ was that when they arose from the dead, they would live upon and enjoy the earth under God's government. This is beautifully expressed in the stirring testimony of Job:

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me (Job 19:25-27).

When we come to the New Testament and examine the four gospels, we find that Jesus Christ confirmed the testimony of David, holding forth the same hope: "**Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth**" (Matt. 5:5). These words were spoken in the sermon on the mount. They are one of the beatitudes, which many people have memorized, but which very few believe. And while it is true that in the same message, He told His disciples to lay up treasures in heaven, this cannot mean that He was promising them heaven as their future home. These words were spoken to the same men to whom He had just held out the hope of inheriting the earth and to whom He would later declare that they would sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. These were positions and services related

to the earth. There is simply nothing in the four Gospels that would lead anyone to think that their future life is to be lived out in heaven.

Of course, many will dispute this and point to John 14:1-6, as positive testimony that a place in heaven was the hope of these men. This is done in spite of the obvious fact that heaven is not the subject of this passage, and no mention is made of it. However, I am well able to sympathize with all who may think that this is the first mention of "a hope of heaven," there being a time in my early ministry when I proclaimed this same "hand-me-down" idea. When the time came that I made an honest study of this passage, I found I was reading ideas into it that were not there. This passage has for so long been tangled up in the emotional reasonings of men that logical thought concerning it is almost impossible. This comes from the fact that this portion of Scripture is used in most funeral services where it is related to death, heaven, and destiny-matters with which it does not deal.

There are certain truths concerning these words of our Lord that need to be fearlessly faced. They were spoken personally and privately to eleven very special men, each one of whom was destined to sit upon a throne and judge a tribe of Israel. And while every believer can read these words and profit from them, he must honestly recognize that the promises in them belong to the apostles to whom they were spoken. Any application of these words to our own lives will simply confuse the witness of God and our understanding of it as well.

If we examine verses 12, 13, and 14 of this same chapter, we will find other promises made that can apply only to the apostles. If we attempt to claim these as promises to us, we are doomed to disappointment. True, we believe on Him; but we cannot do the works that He did --let alone still greater works, as He declared in verse twelve. We have no blanket promise that if we ask anything in His Name, He will do it, as the apostles certainly had, according to verse thirteen and fourteen. In fact, these promises have nothing to do with prayer. They established an unlimited drawing account for these eleven men who were to serve Him in a very special manner.

We need to take a closer look at John 14:1-6. The Lord declared, "**In My Father's house are many mansions.**" This is immediately seized upon by careless readers and incompetent interpreters who say that "the Father's house" is heaven, and the "mansions" are many grandiose buildings in heaven that are being prepared for our occupancy. All who handle this

passage should learn to interpret Scripture by Scripture, a method which usually consists of finding the identical term in a place where its meaning is crystal clear, then applying it to occurrences that may not be so clear or may be in dispute.

The term "My Father's house" is found only two times in the New Testament. Both occurrences are in the Gospel of John, and both came from the lips of our Lord. In John 2:16, He said: "**make not My Father's house an house of merchandise.**" Here the phrase can mean nothing else but the temple in Jerusalem, a temple that will someday be rebuilt and be the center of all life, government, and divine religion in the nation of Israel when God governs. This phrase cannot have one meaning in John 2:16 and another meaning in John 14:2. If so, then anyone can make God's Word to mean whatever he wants it to mean.

The Greek word *mone*, which is translated "mansion" in this passage, is difficult to express in English. We lack a word that corresponds with it. It is found only twice in the New Testament, both occurrences being in this chapter. It is translated "mansion" in verse 2 and "abode" in verse 23, which shows that the KJV translators did not know what to do with it. After much study, I am now convinced that our word "station" best expresses this word, providing we understand "station" to mean **position, sphere of life, duty, or occupation.**

Thus, the Lord declared to His disciples that in His Father's house were many stations, such as positions, duties, and occupations. Then, He declared in 14:23 that those who loved Him and kept His words would find the Father and the Son stationed with them and working through them.

His next statement was: "**I go to prepare a place for you.**" Of course, the place was in the Father's house. And these words cannot mean that He was going to heaven. to sweep it out, clean it up and refurbish it as a dwelling place for them, as much childish theology declares. This is sheer foolishness. He meant that He was going to the Cross and to the Tomb; and by His death and resurrection, a place would be made for them. Before this, He had said to them: "**Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit**" (John 12:24).

Our Lord did go to the Cross and He returned from the state of death. The words, "**I will come again, and receive you unto Myself,**" do not refer to His second coming. They speak of His return from the journey into death. The Lord would not have consoled His disciples by promising them participation in an event none of them ever experienced and which is still future after more than 1900 years.

This "coming" refers to that spoken of in John 14:18 and 23. He said to them: "**I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.**" In considering this, only two alternatives are possible. He either made good His promise and came to them, or He broke His word and left them comfortless. It is my conviction that He came to them and received them unto Himself as recorded in John 20:19-23, a fact that became manifestly public on the day of Pentecost.

There is nothing in John 14:1-6 that would rightfully lead anyone to think that the destiny of the twelve apostles was a place called heaven. Their destiny was an exceedingly high station in the Father's house, the future temple of Israel. Even as David declared long before: "**Blessed is the man whom Thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple**" (Psa. 65:4).

As those who are now believing, a place in the Father's house is not our destiny. We will enjoy our own special place and privileges in this earth when God governs.

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